

Story #297 Tape #10, Summer 1970

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Quality mentions
The Faithful Wife Transcends an Evil Heritage

Once there was and once there wasn't, there were a young man and his wife living somewhere, but they did not have a good income. They had to sell their furniture in order to buy their daily bread. One day his wife said, "We cannot go on like this. If there is no income, the existing property will not last long. If you don't add to it, it will soon disappear. You should go into some business and earn some money."

He said, "All right, but with whom can I leave you? You may be misled."

"No," she answered, "I couldn't be misled. You go! Let me take another gold coin from my necklace in the chest to spend for food."

That was spent, too, but the fellow couldn't leave his wife. "There is no one in my family who went astray," she said. "Go and leave me."

He then told a story to his wife by way of example:

"A merchant used to get married whenever he visited a new town. One day he reached a cit where he wanted to get

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married, as usual. The people of that city told the man, 'That girl's mother is a bad woman [i.e. whore].'

"But the man said, 'Never mind. I can take care of her and protect her.'

"When it was time to leave that city, he had his camels loaded, and had his wife mount one camel. On the road, they came to a bridge. The first camel of the caravan refused to cross the bridge. Then the wife suggested, 'Take the camel I'm riding and put it in front of the caravan. That may succeed. Her camel moved forward, and when her camel went across, the reluctant camel also crossed, following hers.

"Her husband asked, 'How did you know how to make that camel cross the bridge?'

answered, 'This is how I knew: The camel I am riding is the mother of the camel which refused to cross when the mother crossed, of course her young followed from behind.'

"The man said, 'If that's the case, you won't make a good wife for me '"

The wife said, "But this doesn't apply to us."

Her husband answered, "I don't believe it, but they used to say your mother was a bad woman."

"You go and find work," his wife said.

He still refused to go and work, so she took another gold coin from her necklace and they spent that, too.

She again insisted that he go and work, and this time she told him a tale which had another example:

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"Once a man was going to Hejaz (Mecca). Before he left he directed his younger brother to take care of his sister-in-law and protect her. But the pilgrim's wife wouldn't show herself to anyone, including her brother-in-law. One day when he had brought some things she had asked for, she showed him her face a little. She was a beautiful woman, and he fell in love with her. He came and began to pester her. She tried to get rid of him, saying, 'Your brother left me under your care and protection. This is not the right thing to do,' and so on.

"The brother tried slandering her, saying, 'While my brother was away at Hejaz, this woman was unfaithful to him. He took the case to court, and when asked if he had any witnesses, he said, 'Yes

"The judge sentenced the woman to be buried to the waist and stoned. The woman was buried and stoned.

"Later, a traveler who was passing along the road went by her. He heard someone moaning. He looked and saw that a woman was buried among stones. He went and pulled her out and asked her what was the matter.

"She said, 'It was such-and-such. I was slandered and buried here.'

"He brought her to his own house and told her she could live there as his sister. When the woman had recovered, however, the man's ³¹⁻³² slave now started pestering her. When she refused to have anything to do with him, the slave killed his own child and left the bloody knife in the woman's bed. When

the child's mother awoke, she saw that her child was killed. The bloody knife was found in the other woman's bed.

The slave said, 'You see what the woman you brought home did to us? She killed our child. Therefore, I'll kill that woman.'

"The woman cried and told the master she had done no such thing

"I know,' he said, 'that you haven't, but this man may kill you. You had better leave. He gave her some pocket money, and she left.

On the way, she came to a square where there was a big crowd. They were going to hang someone there. She asked, 'What did the man do whom they will hang?'

"They explained, 'He owed the state a great amount of money in taxes. That's why they are hanging him.'

"She said, 'If that man's taxes are paid, would he be saved from hanging?'

"They answered, 'Yes.'

"She paid the money, and the man was released. The man thus saved said, 'I want to see the person who saved me from hanging.'

"They showed him the woman. When he saw her, he was enamored of her and he started pestering the woman now saved me from hanging, and we two shall get married,' he said.

"I have a husband who went to Mejjaz on pilgrimage. He will be back, and a woman can't have two husbands. I was sorry for you and saved you,' she said.

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"I wish you hadn't saved me," he said. "You got me from the fire, but threw me into the water." He then followed the woman wherever she went. He met a caravan and sold her to the caravan driver. This time, they started pestering the woman, and finally they sold her to someone on a ship.

"When the woman was traveling on the ship, the people on the ship started molesting her. She resisted these people. During a storm, the ship was damaged and the crew were all killed. Then it had to be towed ashore, and the woman was the only survivor. She went to the governor of the city and said, 'I came on the wrecked ship. The other people on the ship all died. There are goods of various kinds in the ship. Take those.'

"The governor took the things from the ship. Then the woman asked the governor to build a small cell where she might spend her time praying. To make it brief, they built her a cell, and the woman prayed there for the sick. Her reputation as a healer soon spread all over the country.

"It happened that her brother-in-law, who had abused her so, became blind, and the slave had contracted an itching manginess, and the other one [the debtor she had saved from the gallows] had some other illness.

Now "The pilgrim was back from the Hejaz, and the people explained what had happened. When the pilgrim heard this, he said to his brother, 'Brother, they are saying such-and-such things. Let us go to that woman. Maybe she can heal your blindness.' Her reputation was known through the land.]

"They went and stopped where the slave lived. The slave's master took him, and the other fellow was also taken along. They all reached the place where the woman was. They submitted their applications to the cell of the woman. When the woman looked, she recognized all three. She said to them, 'You stay here today, and I'll heal you tomorrow.' In the meantime, she reported to the governor and asked him to gather the people in the square, saying, 'Three people came, and I want to pray for them in public.

"The governor said, 'All right,' and he assembled the people.

"The next day, she spoke to the crowd as follows: 'My prayers for these three men will not be accepted unless they confess their sins.'

"The one whom she had saved from hanging said, 'I committed such-and-such a crime.' The other one [the slave] also told his crime.

When it was time for the haci's brother, he couldn't make a confession, but the woman said, 'You'll have to, or you won't be healed and you'll have to go as you came.

"His brother insisted: 'Brother, we have taken all this trouble to come here. You must tell.

"'Brother, I cannot,' he said.

"'You must do so.'

"No, I cannot.

"'If you can't, you will not be cured and you'll have to leave as you came.'

"Of course, none of them recognized the woman. Finally, when the man realized he had to make a confession to be cured, he did. He said, 'The matter is such-and-such. He said he had treated a woman badly and as a result had become blind.¹

"The woman then started praying for them and said that she had forgiven them and said that their health would be restored only by her absolving them of their obligations to her [making them helal, i.e.]

"Her husband then recognized her and took her back."

"You see how this woman preserved her honor when her husband was on a pilgrimage. In the same way, I'll take care of myself. Don't worry about me," she said. "Go and find a job for yourself.

But the man still refused to go. One day, this woman gave her husband a rose. "Take this rose and go," she said, "and know that when the rose in your hand fades, I also have faded. As long as it stays fresh, I shall be all right."

man went and got a job as a servant in the palace of a padishah. Each time he entered the chamber of the padishah, he had a rose in his hand. The padishah thought him a young man very fond of roses. Although it was winter and there were no fresh roses anywhere, the young man carried a rose in his hand as fresh as ever.

¹The recapitulation of his actions is telescoped here. Perhaps the raconteur always told it thus telescoped, but it is possible that before a folk audience he would have repeated every detail. The tale-telling session at Camlıdere took place in the office of the Director of Education, and the eight or ten present constituted an audience quite different from that of a coffee house.

Finally the padishah asked, "Where do you get these roses?"

"The matter is such-and-such," he explained to the padishah.

The padishah concluded, "Aha! This man's wife must be a magician. She has made this magic rose, given it to this young man, and sent him away so that she may practice her profession freely at home. But we must find out if this is the case. How shall we do it?"

In his household there were two brothers called Hasip and Nasip. Hasip said to the padishah, "If you give me fifteen days, I'll go and find out and report to you everything about that woman."

The padishah gave Hasip his travel expenses and sent him. He went and found the woman in the town where she was. He explained to the man he met there that he had fallen in love with a woman of such-and-such a description and that he had come to search for her. He was told, "There is an old woman living on such-and-such a street in a house with such-and-such a number. She has a staff and a tespi of 500 beads in her hand. She solves any problem."

He found the old woman and became her guest. He explained his problem to the old woman, and the old woman took her staff and her tespi and went to the girl and said, "O my girl, I see that your husband has been away a long time and you have stayed all alone at home and wasted your youth. How do you manage to live alone? You can't go on this way. One of your

lovers from a distant place has heard about you and has come is now waiting at my house. He wants to see you."

The wife said, "Let him come and see me. If he is worth seeing, I'll see him."

The young man came and she said to him, "Since you've fallen in love with me in a distant land and sent the old woman to me, the old woman may go and tell everyone about it and place me in a bad light, and people may, thinking I'm a bad woman, come and bother me. My advice to you is to go back to the old woman, pay her five or ten kurush, and pretend you didn't like me after you visited me, and then get your things from her house and come here to me."

The young man went to the old woman and said, "I didn't that woman at all. I am sorry to have caused you so much trouble. Take this fee." Then he moved to the wife's house.

The wife had a servant to whom she said, "Someone will come to see me. It is my brother. You go out and knock on the door after he comes and I am entertaining him."

When the young man came to her house, she let him in and after serving him tea and coffee, there came a knock at the door, and she said, "I have a brother who lives nearby come to visit me. Now, you get into the basement." She then locked the door.

She put him in the basement and said, "Now, you must tell me why you have come. If you tell me, all right; if not, you will stay locked in here till you do tell

He said, "The matter is such-and-such." [i.e., he tells

her why he has come. The narrator knows the listener knows what has happened, and so he truncates it.]

"Oh," she said. "Then you must remain here until the right time comes." She gave him food and drink, and the man stayed there fifteen or twenty days and did not return.

The padishah then called Nasip. He said to Nasip, "Well, Hasip has not returned. Go and find out why."

He went to the same coffee house, saw the old woman--and let's don't make it too long³--he was received by the same woman, who put him in the basement, too. He stayed there fifteen days, and there was no sign of Nasip, either.

padishah said to the husband of the woman, "You have been away from your land a long time, and you must have missed it. Let us go and visit your land together."

"All right."

The padishah gave him money and said, "You go and make things ready, and we shall arrive two days later."

The man went home and said to his wife, "Lady, the padishah is to visit us. Do a little preparation." They did what they could in preparation, and the padishah arrived. He was given a room in the house.

then went to Hasip and Nasip and said, "I have an important guest. I shall dress you as women, and I want you to serve him. Then I shall release you."

They agreed to this proposal gladly. She took them from the basement and dressed them as women, and they carried bread and water to the padishah's room and served him tea and coffee.

² This is very clear evidence that the narrator is truncating the tale.

hejal